

WHY BALDWIN CAN DO BETTER THAN A GEO RUN PRIVATE PRISON

THE PROPOSAL

HB-4467 would allow prisoners of any security level to be housed at a **privately-owned for-profit** prison in Baldwin, Michigan.

Current Michigan law prohibits an inmate or detainee from being housed at the facility unless the inmate's or detainee's security classification (as determined by MDOC standards) is Level IV or below, and has never previously been above Level IV.

DANGER TO BALDWIN CITIZENS

Higher level inmates bring increased risk to staff, inmates and the surrounding community. Higher security inmates are traditionally individuals who have been assaultive toward corrections staff, have a history of victimizing other inmates, and could pose a serious escape threat.

WHO MAKES THE RULES?

The bill would delete the definition of "security classification" contained in current law. Deletion of this definition would create a lack of uniformity on how inmates are classified. *There would be one set of rules for the state of Michigan and another set for the privately run prison. And the privately run prison would set its own rules with NO State oversight.*

PITTING MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES AGAINST EACH OTHER

HB-4467, could lead to the closing of one to two state run facilities. While a new prison may look good to one part of the State, prison closures could have disastrous economic consequences to communities which currently house state prisons.

GEO HAS A TRACK RECORD ON RUNNING PRISONS AND IT'S NOT GOOD

- MICHIGAN: **GEO**, doing business as Wackenhut, operated Michigan's Punk Prison in Baldwin which was **closed after a scathing Michigan Legislative Auditor General Report** determined it was the **most abusive prison** in Michigan and the **third most expensive** to run. Since that time it has spent millions to expand the same facility while looking in vain for inmates.
- NEW MEXICO: **GEO was fined \$1.1 million in penalties** for not adequately staffing a private prison it operated there.¹
- TEXAS: An inmate committed suicide inside of the GEO Group's Dickens County Correctional Center, spurring an investigation that led an Idaho Department of Corrections official to say the **GEO Group's Dickens facility in Texas facility** was,

¹ State fines private prison operator \$1.1 million over staffing shortage; By Trip Jennings | The New Mexican 11/14/2011

“the worst prison they’d seen.”² The inmate was an Idaho Department of Corrections prisoner who had been placed with GEO in Texas. The suicide sparked an investigation by the Idaho Department of Corrections.

- **NEW MEXICO:** Between December 1998 and August 1999, four inmate-on-inmate killings were committed in Wackenhut's New Mexico facilities; and then, in August 1999, a Wackenhut guard was murdered. After a major riot at one facility Wackenhut was faulted in a legislative consultants’ report for having inadequate and ill-prepared staff. **The 500-page report called for a near-total overhaul of two of Wackenhut’s operations in New Mexico. Wackenhut is now GEO.³**
- **FLORIDA:** A 2005 internal review by the Florida Department of Management Services revealed that Florida paid nearly \$13-million to GEO and the Corrections Corporation of America for vacant jobs and other questionable expenses. In addition, the report found that the state waived minimal requirements for nurses, vocational trainers and teachers. In 2007, **GEO reached a settlement to pay back part of the \$13 million.⁴**

Michigan laws and the enforcement of those laws are the responsibility of the state of Michigan. Selling off this basic responsibility is morally and ethically wrong.

² WWW.GRASSROOTSLEADERSHIP.ORG, 2009

³³ AFSCME *Department of Research & Collective Bargaining Services, February 2012*

⁴ Ibid.

